

NEWS BRIEFING

ASSISTANT SECRETARY ARTHUR SYLVESTER

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The Pentagon

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11:30 A. M.

Tuesday, October 30, 1962

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MR. SYLVESTER: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I have something to report which I would ask your indulgence to let me finish, and then I will attempt to answer questions.

I have talked this morning with the top officials responsible for the evaluation of the results of our aerial surveillance of Cuba. As a consequence I can report the following: "Analysis of aerial pictures entails a meticulous review of the material disclosed and a pains taking comparison of that material with previously obtained material in order to obtain accurate findings. One has to be careful about making conclusions because there are certain evaluations procedures to be observed in order to insure accuracy of the results obtained. All of this takes time, despite published reports to the contrary. In addition, the time since Chairman Khrushchev's message of Sunday morning is too short to allow us to expect conclusive evidence.

"I assume you will ask me whether we are continuing surveillance of Cuba today. The answer is we are not. The government has agreed to the request of Secretary General U Thant of the United Nations that no surveillance be flown over Cuba during the two days he is in Havana, that is to say, today and tomorrow."

I will try to answer any questions that you may have.

QUESTION: You can't give us some idea on when we may have the results of the pictures?

MR. SYLVESTER: No, I shall stand on this statement here entirely.

QUESTION: Art, can you say whether our pictures show that the Russians have at least stopped work on the missile sites?

MR. SYLVESTER: I am going to stand completely on this statement.

QUESTION: Are the pictures going to be released?

MR. SYLVESTER: Again I am going to stand on this statement here.

QUESTION: Art, can you take up some other questions now?

MR. SYLVESTER: I will try to.

QUESTION: There was a report which I think appeared here locally in one of the newspapers that at least two Soviet submarines were forced to the surface by U.S. fleet or aircraft patrols in the last week or so. Could you tell us as to the nature of the submarines and just what this operation was, where it happened, and so on?

MR. SYLVESTER: If you will recall, Mr. McNamara in his original briefing stated then that we would not be the source of information on Russian military movements, and we are not going to be.

QUESTION: Well, how about our movements?

MR. SYLVESTER: What ones are you talking about?

QUESTION: I am talking about the encounters with Soviet submarines, which was part of the blockade action of last week. You were putting out other information on ships. What I am trying to determine is whether you did encounter Soviet submarines, and what occurred when you did encounter them.

MR. SYLVESTER: I take it, Lloyd, you first stated that we did, and now you are asking me if we did. I have no comment to make whatsoever on any movements of any Soviet ships -- alleged movements of any Soviet craft of any sort.

QUESTION: Art, last week there was considerable discussion, I believe, about the rapidity with which some of these missile bases were being constructed. Is it the view of the Defense Department now that we are perhaps taking a chance in suspending these surveillance flights for two days?

MR. SYLVESTER: I think that the answer is quite clear in its own, that the government has decided to accede to the request of Mr. U Thant.

QUESTION: Warily?

MR. SYLVESTER: I would make no characterization of our actions.

QUESTION: Well, would you have acceded to such a request in the face of evidence that work was continuing on the missile sites?

MR. SYLVESTER: I would never think we would.

QUESTION: Then you are implying certainly that the aerial photographs at least show that work has halted?

MR. SYLVESTER: I am not suggesting anything about the pictures one way or the other, but I think the record shows quite clearly that every move that has been taken has been taken with complete thought, complete consideration of all the contingencies.

QUESTION: Art, there have been some reports that the aircraft missing over Cuba was a U-2. Can you confirm or deny?

MR. SYLVESTER: We are not making any comment on the character of that craft.

THE PRESS: Thank you.